

Changes

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Summary: Simba, Nala and Haiba have gone their separate ways. When an old enemy returns with a deadly plan, will they want anything to do with each other?

***Chapter 1*: Chapter 1: A Free Cub**

AN: Well, here's the next story. It features quite a few dramatic twists and turns. But I'm sure by now you've come to expect such maniacal things from me. Sorry for the long wait. I have been a little busy this week. I put the finishing touches on my book – yes, I wrote a book – and even sent it off to a publisher. I'll be expecting a few crumpled sheets of paper mailed back to me in the coming weeks to say that I suck. Yay for me. So, sorry for making all you brilliant readers wait. I appreciate your patience. Unless you aren't patient at all and just despise me now. If you want to come after me, then buy the appropriate pitchforks and burning torches from your local retailer.

Now, enough of me; go and read the story!

Changes

Chapter One: A Free Cub

Simba awoke with a wide grin on his face.

I'm free.

He hopped to his paws, auburn eyes glancing around the inside of the empty den. Normally he would have been surprised – and rather disappointed – to find it so lonely. However, times had changed. He was a different cub now.

"I'm free!" he exclaimed, happily striding outside of the den. He took a deep breath of the fresh morning air, exhaling deeply afterwards. "I'm free."

He began to walk down Pride Rock, still elated. "I'm free," he said, starting to chuckle. "I'm free... I'm free..."

Simba was well and truly free. It had been about two weeks since he had last done anything heroic in the slightest – and he had to admit, he loved every minute of it! It felt like the most enormous weight had been lifted from his shoulders. A burden that he no longer had to bear.

It was all so relaxing. No more did he have to rescue babies from their burning dens. Never again did he have to stop the most psychotic and murderous villains to ever roam the earth. He never ever had to do any of those things!

There was no more trouble from his parents. They seemed a little freaked out that he was no longer going off on life-threatening adventures, but otherwise they seemed to have calmed down a little bit. However, there was still something about them that he couldn't quite put a claw on...

But he didn't care about that now. He was a free cub! Instead of risking life and limb to protect other animals that he didn't even know about, he now had the chance to do much more important things – like sleeping all day without anyone bothering him! *That* was what was truly important!

"Free, free, free..." Simba sang in a jolly tune as he walked along, heading for the waterhole. "Free, free, free, free, free..."

The pressure was completely off him now. Originally, Simba felt like he was destined to help those around him. Like it was his calling in life. But now he knew better. All those heroics were for nothing. They caused him nothing but stress. Stress that was just... really getting him down. Making him depressed. In all honesty, he felt like tearing all of his fur out at the end of the most frustrating of days. Sometimes the only thing that would make him feel better was the odd joke from Haiba or a lovely kiss from Nala.

Nala...

Simba tried to push her out of his mind, but it seemed that she always seemed to intrude when he was feeling the happiest. It drove him crazy sometimes. It was made quite clear to him that Nala wanted nothing more than to continue with the stresses and strains of heroic life. That... that just wasn't him. He needed something different. Something more.

Of course he still loved her. He couldn't deny that. Couldn't ever deny it. And it wasn't like they had exactly *split up*, it was just... Well, it was complicated. He really couldn't elaborate much more than that. And even though he still possessed feelings for her, he wasn't exactly sure if she felt the same way about him.

Very complicated indeed.

Just forget about her, Simba, he ordered himself. *You know that she's causing you nothing but trouble. She's a good-for-*

nothing—

Don't say it, he interrupted himself.

That was another thing that seemed to have developed for him recently. He always kept on hearing this really dark, evil voice in his head. He knew it was just his wild imagination conjuring up ways to annoy him, but sometimes it seemed like this... voice... had a mind of its own. *Nala's not a bad person. She's just confused about what's right for me and what's wrong for me. She doesn't get it.*

So why the heck are you still moping after her, you coward? the dark side of him countered. *It's time to grow up! Forgive and forget!*

Forgive her for what? asked Simba. *She hasn't done anything for me to forgive.*

Oh, you know what I mean! Just empty your head of everything to do with her, and strike up a relationship with a new cub. There are plenty of hotties down by the waterhole, aren't there?

Simba's eyes widened slightly. *Did you just say "hotties"? I can't believe you just said that.*

But I didn't say it, his dark side retorted. *I thought it. And I'm you – so it's all your fault! What do you think about that, huh?*

I think I'm confused.

Let's keep it that way, Simba. Let's keep it that way...

Simba shook his head, ignored his weird thoughts, and pressed on forwards. No matter what he was thinking, Nala just always seemed to be stuck in his head. There was so much she had done for him, and it wasn't like he could just forget it all.

There was also a lot she had left behind. Nala hadn't returned to the Pride Lands ever since Simba had quit being a hero. He did hope – just a little bit – that she would see sense and come back to be happy with him in the kingdom.

But unfortunately, this never happened. He hadn't seen Nala in two weeks. He didn't know where she had gone, or what she was doing. She was just... gone. As for her mother, she was devastated...

"What do you mean, she's gone?" Sarafina yelled, tears forming in her heartbroken eyes.

Simba remained stiff, unable to find the right words to describe what had happened between him and Nala. "She... she had to do some things," he lied kindly. "Without me. I don't know if she's coming back or not."

And with that, he left Sarafina to cry. There was nothing more to be said.

He hoped that at least Haiba was looking after her. Sometimes, late at night, when he couldn't sleep, he wondered if she was safe. Hoping that she hadn't been murdered by a psychopathic frog or eaten by a hypnotic snake.

But then he couldn't ever be sure unless he was there with her. Haiba could have gone miles and miles away with some beautiful cub, never to see his friends ever again.

Sighing, Simba allowed a small frown to spread across his face, and a barely audible whisper to escape his muzzle:

"I miss you..."

Sometimes, being happy could feel like quite the opposite.

Far, far away, on the edge of the tallest cliff in the beauty that was the jungle, a certain lion stood. His black fur was ruffled slightly in the light breeze, and he seemed to be gazing intently at something in the distance – like an eagle observing its next prey.

He combed a paw through his blonde mane, continuing to stare at the same spot. It was like he'd been there for hours, stood as still as a stone statue. He looked like he couldn't be moved. He was a stubborn force.

The target of his stare seemed to be an extremely noticeable – and famous – structure on the horizon.

Pride Rock would be recognisable to most lions. Especially this one. He had a score to settle. This lion had murder in his eyes and revenge in his heart. He wouldn't rest until what was wrong was put well and truly right. He deserved that at the very least.

The lion with the evil black fur and attractive blonde mane opened his mouth and let out an ear-piercing screech, capable of deafening any animals unlucky enough to be in the nearby vicinity.

The widest of grins spread across the lion's face, like the screech alone were some kind of insane victory over his enemies.

And then he spoke.

"I like it!"

Chapter 2: Chapter 2: Our Saviour

Chapter Two: Our Saviour

"*Help! Somebody, please help me!*"

The girlish screams and cries could be heard from all over the jungle! Whoever this was, they were certainly in a lot of terror!

"*Please! Help!*" Tojo screamed at the top of his squeaky voice. "*I don't want to die! I don't want to—*"

Tojo's assailant, Shocker, clamped a paw over his mouth, preventing him from speaking – or rather, *screaming* – any further. "Shut up," he snarled, in his usual threatening voice. "Screaming like a female isn't going to help you."

"I don't scream like a female!" Tojo protested in a muffled voice. "Tama just says that I'm a late bloomer— Ow!"

Shocker pressed his paw right up against Tojo's muzzle, truly cutting off his speech for good this time. "Do you ever stop speaking?" he asked. "I've never been confronted with such a pansy of a cub. I was under the impression that all males were stronger than females."

Tojo raised his paw; a silent way of asking to speak. Although he doubted it would be very beneficial to him, Shocker removed his paw from Tojo's mouth. "That's a pretty sexist thing to say."

Shocker rolled his eyes, and prodded his claws in Tojo's chest. He yelped loudly as a slightly electrical shock rocked his body. "Yow! Hey, what the heck is wrong with you? That really hurt!"

"That *was* my intention," Shocker informed him. "I don't take very kindly to cubs passing through my home. In fact, come to think of it, I don't take kindly to cubs anyway. I really should come up with a suitable way to dispatch of you all instantly."

"Well, if memory serves, there are millions of cubs in the—" Tojo was met with another painful shock. This time in the stomach. "*Hey!* What gives?"

"Do you ever shut up?" Shocker asked, beginning to get tired of Tojo's senseless speech. "I almost feel too exhausted to murder you."

"Well, that's a relief," Tojo smiled, glancing up at the night sky. "You'd better get some sleep."

Sinisterly and slowly, Shocker leaned in close. His smile showed nothing but cruelty. "I said *almost*."

Tojo gulped. Shocker was more than crazy. He was *murderous*! "L-look," he stammered, "I – I don't want a-any t-t-trouble..."

"You should have thought about that before you walked into my humble abode," Shocker retorted.

Tojo spared a look for the tatty vine hammock that stretched out between two nearby trees. "You call that a 'humble abode'?" He then gasped, covering his mouth with both paws, in shock at what he has just uttered. "I didn't mean that."

A loud, angry growl rose in Shocker's throat. "You really shouldn't have said that," he told him. "I mean, you *really* shouldn't have said that. Anyone – I mean *anyone* – who insults my home will receive nothing but the most painful of deaths."

"Painful?" Tojo squeaked, his eyes wide with fear. "As in... *painful* painful?"

"*Painful* painful painful," Shocker replied.

Tojo let out a squeaky scream. "Please! *Anything* but that! You can pull my claws out! My fur, even! Just don't kill me! I have a mate and three kids!"

"You're barely a year old," Shocker said.

I don't like this cub, Tojo thought. *He reads minds.*

"Don't worry, though," Shocker said. "At least you'll have the honour of being able to say that you've been killed by the great and mighty Shocker."

"What makes you think I'll have anyone to talk to?" Tojo questioned.

"Don't worry about the afterlife," said Shocker. "All good cubs go to heaven. As for me..." He chuckled. "I don't get a very bright future. Just the dark and the cold, I'm afraid."

"And what makes you so 'great and mighty'?" said Tojo. "You can be really full of yourself – and I've only known you for five minutes!"

"You're making it worse for yourself," Shocker said, frowning. Tojo noticed that the tips of his claws were crackling with electricity. "It's amazing: in only five minutes, you've managed to become one of my greatest nuisances."

Tojo severely regretted this. He'd only stepped out from his and Tama's nice, cosy little home in the jungle just for a drink of water. Just one little sip – was that too much to ask for?

Obviously, it was – otherwise he would never have gotten lost and bumped into the evillest cub to ever walk the earth. He was so evil that he had to ability to shock pure fear into his poor little heart. Or maybe that was because of something else – but the point still stood!

Oh, how he wished he was back home, cuddled up with his girlfriend. He was pretty sure that if Tama were around, then she sure would have showed this Shocker guy a thing or two! No one messed with her cutesy-wutesy Tojo!

Yeah – he didn't like that nickname much, either.

"Now, how shall I kill you?" Shocker pondered. He seemed to be taking joy out of every second of this. "Perhaps I should drive a sharp, pointy stick through all of your legs! And then break your neck – just a *little* bit – so it won't kill you. And then I'm going to..."

Three Hours Later...

"... and then I'll rip out *another* one of your organs, before tying them into a pretty little bow and making you eat them – all while you're choking on your own vomit and blood!" Shocker let out an evil cackle.

Tojo was sat on the ground, tracing circles in the dirt with his claw. He looked up sleepily. "What? Sorry, could you say that again?"

"Huh?" Shocker bared his sharp teeth in anger, walking slowly towards Tojo. "You mean to say that I've been carefully explaining how I'm going to dispatch of you for three hours... and you... weren't even... *listening*?"

"Well, I – uh..." Tojo chuckled nervously. "You see, it was very long and I get bored very easily and..." He covered his face with his paws. "*Not the face!*"

Shocker scraped his claws across the ground, summoning up the biggest shock possible—

—when he was suddenly attacked by an unseen figure!

Shocker grunted in pain as he was shoved up against the tree, and found himself staring into the familiar teal eyes of one of his greatest enemies.

"Nala?"

Nala looked like she had the fury of a thousand lionesses inside of her. "I just love a big, strong cub who's not afraid to show it... with someone half his size," she said, in a surprisingly seductive voice for someone like her.

Shocker growled, trying to escape her grasp. There was something... different about Nala. He couldn't figure it out.

She laughed, forcing Shocker back against the tree. "Be gentle. It's my first time," she said, her eyes a sinister red colour. She then sent a flurry of scratches across Shocker's face, before he crumpled to the ground in pain, unconscious.

Tojo sighed in relief, rushing up to her. "Oh, thanks, Nala. He really scared me—"

Nala suddenly turned on Tojo, swatting him back against another tree. "You make it so easy, don't you?" she asked. "You pathetic creature. Always waiting for someone else to save you."

Tojo quaked with fear. His mouth was twitching. Now was *Nala* out to kill him, too? It sure seemed like it...

Nala leaned in close, whispering throatily into Tojo's ear.

"I am Nala. *Hear me roar.*"

And then suddenly she was gone.

Tojo blinked twice, and then looked around. All he could see was Shocker's unconscious body on the ground. His face was riddled with gory scars, all of them bleeding profusely.

"Oh, dear..." he mumbled, before rushing off in fear. He didn't want Shocker to wake up and finish what he started. "*Tama!* Where are you? I need tender love and care! And a bedtime story, if it's not too much trouble!"

From the shadows, a lone cub watched Tojo leave the area. "*At least you have someone,*" she whispered, before disappearing in a flash.

AN: I don't think you expected a nice cameo from either Tojo or Shocker, did you? Well, I felt it would have been a bit of a nice surprise. Especially since you all love Tojo. Oh, and don't worry about Tama the Terrible. You'll be seeing her soon enough...

And the Interceptor's back! Yay! Yay! Yay! I just *love* that guy! Never doubt a cheesy game show character to make you the happiest writer alive. *I like it!*

As for Nala, she's taken a bit of a freaky turn. It's almost like I based her off of a seductive movie interpretation of a comic book character from the early '90s...

Yes, that was a call for all you intelligent readers to spot the influence. If you can't, then you're certainly not alone. Either way, you get an imaginary chocolate fudge cake. 'Cause we all love them, don't we? See ya later!

Chapter 3: Chapter 3: The Kifo Stone

AN: I'm on time! Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes! No illness, no computer viruses; nothing! So, I can happily reply to your lovely reviews and give you the next two chapters without any hassle at all. Now *everyone's* happy!

KaylaDestroyer: Yep. *Ice Age* reference. Sounded like a funny one to put in. You certainly know your references!

LionKingFactsGuy2: Jessica Rabbit? That's a pretty farfetched one. But you were right: it was Catwoman! Or, to be more specific, the interpretation of her from the 1992 film *Batman Returns*. Can't resist a bit of Tim Burton insanity.

HeeroKitsune17: Well, you're certainly eager to see me back, aren't you? I am, too, if I'm honest. So, is this Heero thing a book you're planning on writing someday? Certainly sounds like quite a depressing tale. You might just make me cry. Or laugh. I'm evil that way.

anonymous13: "Delightfully bizarre" is the perfect way to describe *Interceptor*. It's one of those game shows that's so ridiculous you just find it funny. Yeah – they did only make eight episodes. But we had a lot of money cutbacks in the '80s with British TV. *Interceptor* fell foul of that. But, hey – he lives on in my series! He's all mine now! Time for an evil laugh, I think...

Phew! That was a lot of reviews to reply to today! Now knock yourself out with the new chapters! Not literally, though. Please don't. I've already been sued once.

Chapter Three: The Kifo Stone

Stalking through the thick vines and fauna in the jungle, the Interceptor kept his intense stare focused on what was ahead of him. Being so well-trained and strong, the average obstacle – something that a lion would have trouble with – caused him no bother at all. He'd spent years of his life dedicated to hunting through exhausting deserts and mind-bending jungles in search of his prey. It was all he knew.

And, to be honest, he didn't want to know anything else.

The Interceptor knew exactly where he was going. After staring at Pride Rock for a required three hours – he did that a lot – he started making his way towards the destination that would finally ensure that he had his ultimate revenge.

After all, what Simba – and, to a lesser extent, Nala and Haiba – had done to him was so embarrassing. For a professional psychotic assassin such as himself, those three cubs had certainly put him through quite a fiasco! After all, didn't he have a reputation to uphold? Not very many fellow lions were going to want to hire a deadly predator that actually wasn't very deadly at all!

But no. The Interceptor would make sure that his reputation stayed completely intact. Luckily, no one had spotted him deep down in that dark, musty hole that Simba had made him fall into. It had taken him three days to climb back out. Not to mention the boredom... That was *torturous*!

So the Interceptor had a score to settle. That puny little Prince Simba was going to pay for all the trouble that he had caused him. The Interceptor had his fair share of impressive contacts – mostly consisting of random lions he'd threatened – and they were more than happy to let him in on some of the lesser-known 'secrets' of the jungle...

For instance, the secret of the Kifo Stone.

A common myth was spread around by the various jungle creatures was that there was a hidden, rare, valuable stone nestled away deep in the middle of a secluded jungle temple. It was said to have been created by the most evil villain of them all... but the Interceptor didn't know whether that was true or not. Probably just suspicious mumbo-jumbo the fools there made up.

But rumour had it that once a certain someone *found* the Kifo Stone – that certain someone possessing nothing but a heart full of evil – then they would have the power to destroy anything and everything. The Interceptor would be able to make kingdoms crumble! He could make lions explode! He could make cubs choke on their own blood! Anything was possible with the Kifo Stone!

The Interceptor had finely tuned senses, and could practically *smell* that this secret temple was close by. Any minute now he'd be in possession of the Kifo Stone, and using it to make Simba squeal and squirm in utter agony. That was the Interceptor's idea of a productive Tuesday afternoon.

The Interceptor came to a halt at an extremely tall bush that seemed to stretch on for miles; almost as if it was separating one part of the jungle from another. He stuck a paw through it, and discovered that the entire bush was thick with branches. It was like some kind of makeshift wall. How odd...

The Interceptor was unfazed by this, and just chuckled. "*I like it!*" he exclaimed, before getting to work with his perfectly sharp claws and hacking and slashing swiftly at the branches in the bush.

It wasn't long before the Interceptor had cleared a nice path through the bush, and made it safely onto the other side.

He then smiled, before laughing at the top of his voice at what he had found.

Clearly the bush was something of an attempt to deter any curious explorers from finding the remnants of the stone temple behind it. It looked like the temple had been destroyed for quite some time, and all that remained were a few half-broken pillars sticking out of the ground and the occasional dead branch.

However, there was one thing in particular that struck the Interceptor as significant.

In the middle of the temple's wreckage was a stone podium. On this was what appeared to be a glowing red stone. Very shiny, too. And it looked evil. *Seriously* evil.

"*I like it!*" the Interceptor yelled in triumph, before rushing over to the podium and staring at the Kifo Stone. That was *definitely* what this was. He was sure of it. The key to his ultimate revenge plan.

The Interceptor reached out with an eager paw, ready to snatch the Kifo stone from the podium—

—when suddenly, something quite odd happened.

The stone changed colour, growing a more intense shade of red. It was so bright that the Interceptor had to shield his eyes.

A strong funnel of crimson floated out from the stone and a hazy, fiery image of a black lion with a grey mane appeared. His claws were extremely long. But what was confusing was that he seemed to be talking to someone else.

"... What, you mean I have to do voicemail now?" said the lion. "I mean, who does that help? I'm the master of all evil; I have better things to do with my time!" He sighed. "Fine."

The Interceptor watched with bemusement as the lion turned his attention to him.

"Hey, fellow evildoer!" the lion greeted him. "I'm not here right now, yadda, yadda, yadda, so I'm going to tell you three very important things about that carefully crafted stone that I made for you. One: kill people. *Please*. It'll make my job so much easier. B— No, two: don't use it too much or you'll explode. I'm trying to get the safety features in – probably after I've enslaved the universe, so let me get back to you on that. Three, or C: it'll only work on those who you have an actual connection with, so don't go trying to blow up entire planets at a time; it won't work, Mr Destructive. And coming in at a very low four, or D, or that little 'IV' they use in brackets on footnotes: you'll only be able to use it twenty-four hours after touching it. If you try to use it before then, then I refer to A. Or was it one? Or 'I'? Oh, I don't even know! Just be cautious! Talk to you later, babe."

The lion disappeared, and the Kifo Stone returned to normal. The Interceptor was left feeling very confused at what had just happened, but at least now he knew the rules.

"So who were you?" the Interceptor asked, before picking up the stone and staring at it in his paw. "You didn't sound very evil. Probably Death or something." He chuckled. "That'd be a good one."

The Interceptor stuck the Kifo Stone in his mouth for safe-keeping, and then walked away from what remained of the temple.

Simba was finally going to get what he deserved.

"Okay, shall we run through this again, and get it right this time?" Zazu asked.

Pori was perched on the branch of one of the many dead trees in the Outlands, staring straight ahead. "Whatever you say, Zulu. All I know is that I'm flying out of here the first chance I get!"

"But there are so many more things I have to teach you!" Zazu protested. "You can't just give up on your important

education! What would your parents think?"

"I quit being a teacher ages ago," Pori retorted. "School is the most boring thing ever invented. How about we make anti-school – a kind of place where you just sit there having fun all the time? I think it'd be great!"

"What it *would* be is completely worthless," Zazu said, folding his wings and frowning sternly at Pori. He just couldn't understand her negativity towards learning. It was necessary for all the animals in the world! Well, Simba was an exception – but he was too awkward anyway! "Pori, just where exactly are you planning on flying to?"

"Anywhere and everywhere," she replied. "Might even go look for the legendary Kifo Stone. Maybe I'll even find a few of them – I could make such a nice necklace!"

"Wait, wait, wait," said Zazu, shaking his head. "The legendary what?"

Pori rolled her eyes. "Oh, Zingo, the legendary *Kifo Stone*!" she exclaimed. "In the jungle, it's what all the nasties are after!"

Zazu frowned. "'Nasties'?" he said.

"Yeah. Nasties," said Pori. "Mean people. Apparently they say that the Kifo Stone is the source of all nastiness in the world! Anyone who gets it can do all different kinds of nasty things! Nasty! Nasty! Nasty!" she said, jumping up and down on the branch.

"I get it, okay?" said Zazu. "This 'Kifo Stone' is a positively repulsive artefact. I sincerely doubt that it exists, though."

"Don't be so silly!" Pori exclaimed. "Of *course* it exists! A friendly little lion called Liar told me so!"

Zazu sighed. "Sometimes I doubt your brainpower, Pori."

"Thanks!"

***Chapter 4*: Chapter 4: Don Haiba**

Chapter Four: Don Haiba

Jowai Resort was about as far away as you could get – if it was a high-class break you were looking for. With its lavish palm trees and sunny weather all year round, you really couldn't ask for a better retreat. Sure, it would cost you a few wildebeest to get in – but you'd probably end up eating the same wildebeest on your first night there. The staff ran a highly efficient and professional service. It was the very best in luxury.

Nala had known about Jowai Resort from a young age. Before her mother had ever mentioned moving to the Pride Lands, she had often dreamed of one day living at Jowai Resort. The words still echoed in her head.

"Oh, Nala. One day we'll have something better. We'll live at Jowai Resort. You'll have nothing but the best there."

Being only a baby, Nala didn't quite understand what her mother meant. All she knew was that this Jowai Resort place had to be good. Her mother always wanted her to have the best. The stuff that she never had at her age.

Nala frowned at the thought of her mother. She missed her. Nala often worried about how her mother had taken her sudden absence. Had Simba told her? Did she know anything at all about where she'd gone? Did her mother think she was *dead*?

No. That couldn't be true. Surely Simba – as much as a ditcher he was – had bothered to explain the circumstances of why she had left the Pride Lands. It had been made quite clear to her that Simba no longer wanted to be a hero.

Nala, on the other paw, had different ideas. It was the right thing, being a hero. She, Simba and Haiba made quite the team. Sure, it was the craziest team ever known to lion, but still a team, nonetheless. They were great together. They'd done amazing things. Saved lives. And that was the most important thing of all.

Maybe that was partly why she was trekking towards Jowai Resort, in the hopes that she'd be able to find someone who could help her.

Especially after seeing the Interceptor making off with the Kifo Stone.

Yes, Nala had seen the whole thing. The Interceptor cutting through the bush, finding the ancient ruins, and then making off with one of the most evil artefacts ever created. Well, from Death, what did she expect?

She wouldn't be able to stop the Interceptor on her own. Even with Simba and Haiba on her side they'd barely been able to defeat him. She didn't know how he was still alive, or what he had planned, but it wasn't good; and that meant that he had to be stopped.

Well, there was only one way to defeat a crazy villain. Find someone else who was crazy. Someone who perhaps *might* still want something to do with her.

Nala noticed the trees were changing their appearance. There were now palm trees on either side of her. The geography of the surrounding areas of the Pride Lands was quite strange. According to what she'd heard in the jungle, Jowai Resort had an extremely tropical climate. It was right on the border between the jungle and the nearby desert. Nothing but heat and sun for the whole year. Never once did it rain, and never once was anyone unhappy.

"How fruity..." Nala remarked, in her new little tone. She'd changed a little after being ditched by Simba. He was the only cub she'd ever loved, and after just tossing her aside like nothing, he'd broken her heart.

But she ignored that. She ignored that horrible, aching pain in her chest. She wasn't going to let him destroy her feelings. If he didn't want anything to do with her, then so be it. As far as she was concerned, she and Simba were no longer together. It was about time that she started looking for other boyfriends...

Nala noticed a makeshift sign in the ground. Scratched into it were the words 'JOWAI RESORT'.

"Time for a little break, I think," Nala said, before strolling along the neatly-formed path.

She continued along the narrow, winding path until she reached a small clearing at the end. A few more palm trees blocked her path.

And then, so did a lioness.

"Can I help you?" the lioness asked.

Nala casually examined her claws. "I'm looking for... a friend," she said, as if uninterested about it all.

"Is it Don Haiba?"

Nala was in the middle of licking her paw when the lioness said that. "Don Haiba?"

The lioness nodded. "The highest-ranking crime boss in all of the jungle. He has many... female friends."

"This is a set-up, right?" asked Nala. "Don't tell me that cute little Haiba has disguised himself as some kind of evil leader."

"It's *Don* Haiba," the lioness corrected him.

"Don't correct me, girl," Nala snapped, before walking past the lioness and squeezing through the narrow palm trees. "I'm not as nice as I used to be."

The lioness could have sworn she saw Nala's eyes glowing red as she said that...

After pressing on through more palm trees, Nala came to another large clearing. Although this time it had a lot more appeal to it.

A giant river dominated the centre of the clearing. Clustered around it were several comfy-looking makeshift beds made out of leaves. All of them were empty.

"It must cost a *lot* of wildebeest to get in here..." Nala mused as she scanned the makeshift beds, searching for 'Don' Haiba. "Haiba? You around here?" she called, managing to sound loud and quiet at the same time.

"Yo! Nala!"

Nala's eyes instantly locked onto the sound of the voice. When she saw who was calling her, her eyes widened in response. "Oh. My. Gosh."

It was Haiba, lying in one of the makeshift beds across the river. Although, he seemed to have taken a serious turn for the worse. His stomach was now about three times its normal size! And he seemed to have grown an extra chin. Just what were they feeding him in this place...?

Two attractive lionesses were stood on either side of Haiba. They were fanning him with a few large leaves they held in their mouths.

"Just the pussy I've been looking for," Haiba said, smiling at Nala. "Come on over here."

Narrowing her eyes, Nala carefully made her way around the edge of the river. She stood in front of Haiba, simply glaring at him.

"It's been a while," Haiba said. "About two weeks now."

Nala couldn't help but look surprised. "Haiba—"

"It's *Don* Haiba, now," he corrected her. "I've made a bit of a reputation for myself."

Nala rolled her eyes, not impressed in the slightest. "Okay, *Don* Haiba, what happened to your body? You look like you've grown three sizes."

"Good food here," Haiba replied, before stroking one of the lionesses under the chin. She purred in response. "And good girls. Nice girls. Very nice girls..."

"I'm going to throw up," Nala said, feeling a wretch building up in her stomach. This was making her sick. "Would you mind telling me what you've been doing *before* that happens?"

"I'm now in charge of the Official Villain League," Haiba informed her. "I organise two hundred and eighty-four villains in seventy-six different prides."

Nala didn't look convinced. "In two weeks?" she asked doubtfully.

Haiba's eyes shifted left and right nervously. "Yeah. That's right. Two weeks."

"You are such a sleaze," Nala told him. She sighed. "I was going to ask you for help, but now I'm not so sure." She turned her head. "See you later, *Don* Haiba."

Nala began to walk off.

Haiba's eyes widened and he struggled to get up from his makeshift bed. "Hey, yo! Wait up! Yo!"

Nala turned around to face him. "'Yo'?"

"It's my new catchphrase word," Haiba told her.

"Something you made up?" Nala presumed.

Haiba whispered in her ear. "Actually, it's something I'm saying just so these pretty girls will think I'm the villain I'm *pretending* to be."

"You mean there's actually a real Don Haiba—"

Haiba covered her mouth. "Shut up," he hissed. "I've got too much of a good thing going on here for a strangely seductive cub like you to wreck it for me. Did you do something to your fur?"

"I've had a little change of heart," Nala said. "And if you're not too fat to walk, then maybe now you'd be interested in what I have to say?"

Haiba rolled his eyes. "What do you want?"

AN: Ugh! Haiba's turned quite... ugly, hasn't he? And he was doing so well. It seems our favourite cubs are changing quite a lot. Even Nala seems a little corrupted. And why are her eyes glowing red? What's the Interceptor going to do? Will Simba give up for good? So many questions! I'm afraid we'll have to tackle the answers tomorrow...

Chapter 5: Chapter 5: Nala's Vengeance

AN: I might just be able to give you all the chapters on time this week. Isn't this so much better after the recent problems I've been having?

HeeroKitsune17: Well, let's hope that you get that game developed. I'm sure I'll be playing it on my PlayStation 6 in the coming years with my near-dead hands.

the-mysterious-other: Thanks for the birthday greeting – but I turned sixteen ages ago. It was on July 27th! So you could say that you're *very* late!

LionKingFactsGuy2: The Nasties? Suppose it is a bit like *Neverending Story* 3. Just don't make me watch it again. Please! There's only so much awfulness I can take!

Kblade: Aw, don't hate Simba! He's really good on the inside! You'll see that in the coming chapters. And yes, it is nice to have some Tojo and Shocker cameos. A lot of old characters seem to be coming back in this story. It's actually quite important, isn't it?

HKGhost: Whatever you do, *don't* send the Interceptor after me! I don't think I can outrun a crazy British psycho in a helicopter! And besides, I'm on time today! See?

KaylaDestroyer: Haiba hasn't joined the dark side. He's just reaping the benefits by *pretending* to be on the dark side. Then again, you could say that's just as bad. Oh, well.

So many reviews today! Keep 'em coming, I say! They're making me feel so satisfied!

Chapter Five: Nala's Vengeance

"You remember that putrid lion, the Interceptor?" Nala asked.

"Of course I do," Haiba replied. "He forced us into that gruelling challenge where we had to run until we couldn't run any further." He gestured to the newfound wideness of his body. "If we had to do that now, then I'm afraid I wouldn't make it more than a few steps."

"I can see that," Nala said, frowning at how Haiba had managed to let himself go. He wasn't just big – he was *huge*! "Well, the Interceptor has managed to acquire quite a pretty little object from some wreckage."

"Please don't tell me it was shiny," Haiba moaned, covering his face with a paw. "I don't want any more Uchoyo Diamonds haunting me..."

"It's called a Kifo Stone," Nala explained.

"Oh, right, the Kifo Stone..." Haiba nodded, before realising what Nala had said. "Wait, *what*? As in, the ultimate destructive force in the world? I thought that was only a legend!"

"Well, the Interceptor's managed to get his paws on it," Nala informed him. "And for my own... personal reasons, I'd like to take it off him..."

"Personal reasons?" Haiba was confused. "What do you mean by that?"

Nala grabbed Haiba by the throat, pulling his face up to hers. He was particularly disturbed to find that Nala's eyes were glowing a sinister red. "It means that I want the stone to take care of a certain little cub that completely destroyed my once-happy life."

"This isn't about Simba, is it?" he asked.

"*Everything* is about Simba," Nala retorted. "You saw what he did, Haiba."

"Yeah – while dangling from a tree I was tied up to," said Haiba. "Thanks for not untying me, by the way. It took me six hours to bite through those vines."

"That's not important right now, Haiba," Nala said. "I want Simba bruised, broken, bleeding; in a word, dead."

"Uh, why?" asked Haiba.

"He broke my heart – now I'm going to break him," Nala explained, in the simplest terms she could manage. What she spoke was the truth. Simba had betrayed their love; it was about time he paid the price for that. No one messed with Nala and got away with it. Not anymore.

"But, um, won't the Interceptor be after revenge?" said Haiba.

"Of course he'll be after revenge!" Nala exclaimed. "But do you think I'm going to give someone like *him* the pleasure of destroying Simba? No way. His death should reside with me."

"One more question," Haiba said. "Why are your eyes red? Sorry, why are they *glowing* red? I find that quite worrying."

Nala let out an evil little giggle. "Might have been a little bit of an accident after that whole Family of Blood business. You could say I've developed something of an... *unfriendly* personality."

"I know I should be horrified," said Haiba, "but that giggle was *really* cute."

Nala smirked, before kissing Haiba softly on the muzzle. "Keep up the compliments and you might end up with more than kisses by tonight," she said teasingly. "Now, come on. We have work to do." She walked off.

Haiba grinned. "Me likey!" he exclaimed, before hurriedly following after her. "Can we move a bit slower, though? I'm having trouble feeling my legs."

"Leaving so soon, Don Haiba?" asked the lioness who guarded the entrance to Jowai Resort as Nala and Haiba strode past.

"Yeah— I mean, *yo!*" he replied, before trying to keep up with Nala as best he could. "Don't worry about me. Just kiss each other or something while I'm away!"

A sly smile crossed the lioness's face. "That won't be much of a problem..."

"It's so hot around here," Nala complained, walking out of a clearing and coming to the side of a clean, fresh stream. It seemed to cut right through the jungle. "We should swim down this stream to cool off. It'll be quicker to get back to the Pride Lands, too."

"You can't expect me to swim down there!" Haiba protested. "If I jump in that river, then I'm gonna sink!"

Nala rolled her eyes. "Fine," she said, before scanning the surrounding area. She spotted a few loosely connected planks of jagged wood on the side of the stream. Like a makeshift raft. "We'll use these."

Nala waded into the stream, before leaning over one of the rafts. "We'll lean over this and paddle our way down the stream," she explained. "It's like a boat. You'll have to use your own, though; you're too wide for us to share."

Haiba still looked quite petrified.

Nala sighed. "Haiba, what's the problem?"

"Don't you understand?" Haiba asked, moving closer to Nala. "These boats ain't made for the ocean. Put – put them in the water, they're not gonna make it."

"Yes, they are!" Nala insisted.

Haiba shook his head, causing his large chin to wobble. "*They're not gonna make it, Nala!*"

Nala slapped him in the face. "Focus, Haiba! This is a stream – not an ocean! And we'll be just fine! Now get in that stream and start rowing!"

"Oh, what's wrong with me?" Simba moaned, lying on his stomach and staring at his reflection in the waterhole. He traced a few shapes in the water with a claw. "I just don't get it..."

It was like some kind of freaky mystery. Simba had spent weeks and weeks of his life mulling over whether to quit or not, and now that he had, he wasn't enjoying it at all! It felt like a big part of his life had gone missing. As if a part of his soul itself had been torn out. He didn't understand it...

Simba... you're still thinking about her... a voice said in his head.

Simba's dark side.

I'm not thinking about Nala, he argued.

You can't hide your own secrets from yourself, Simba, the dark Simba said. *You have no choice but to admit the truth to me every time. That's why I'm your best friend.*

You can't be my friend if you're... me, Simba thought. *It doesn't make any sense.*

That's the beauty of the mind, his dark side retorted. *It may seem weird, but when you think about it for long enough... it makes perfect sense. You just need to learn that, Simba.*

I think you're crazy, Simba thought.

Well, if I'm crazy, then so are you, replied the dark Simba. *There's no way of fighting me, Simba. You're just going to have to deal with it.*

"Leave me alone!" Simba suddenly yelled, taking an angry splash at the water.

He stared at his sad reflection for a few moments, before realising that his outburst was completely pointless and closing his eyes, sighing in misery.

Being alone was horrible. He had to admit it now. For so long he'd been dreaming of a quiet, easy life – but it just wasn't the same. Being a hero may have been stressful and dangerous and frustrating – but it was also rewarding. There was always this... satisfying feeling once he'd done something helpful. At the end of a long and tiring day, he felt a lot less hollow than he did now.

Right now, he had nothing. Nothing at all. No one to help him. No one to have fun with. No one to love him. No one like Nala...

How could he have been so stupid to let her go like that? He'd been nothing but an idiot. So foolish to let the most important thing in the world to him. Now she'd probably gone and killed herself because of the sadness. All thanks to him making such a stupid decision.

But what Simba didn't know was that Nala was very much alive and well, and that she wasn't exactly going to greet Simba with open paws once she saw him again.

More like open *c*laws.

***Chapter 6*: Chapter 6: The Dark Side of Simba**

Chapter Six: The Dark Side of Simba

Faster... Nala urged, kicking her hind legs faster as she leant over the raft. She was going as fast as she could, desperate to get to the Pride Lands before the end of the day. She had allowed Simba to live for long enough already. She should have finished him off ages ago...

But for some reason, a quiet voice in the back of Nala's head was telling her that this wasn't the right thing to do. That she shouldn't kill Simba. He should be... allowed to live. Maybe she could even make amends and get back together with him—

No, Nala suddenly decided. *I won't give in. The old, happy Nala is gone. Happiness is overrated anyway. Being mean is so much better. Think of how satisfying it's going to be to watch your ex-boyfriend choking to death on his own blood!*

That doesn't sound very happy at all... the quiet little voice replied. The old Nala.

Nala shook her head, blocking the voice out. *I've made my choice. Simba must die. He must die!*

But you still love him... the old Nala reminded her. *You know you do. After all, you can't just ignore that cute little face and that adorable tuft, now, can you?*

Nala's mouth twitched in what might have been a smile. *Well, it is kind of— Shut up! I don't want to hear anymore! Simba broke my heart! For that he must pay the ultimate price! He can't be allowed to live...*

You don't deserve to call yourself Nala anymore, said the voice. *You're not her. You've changed.*

Nala frowned. *Yeah. I have. For the better.*

Giving up on the argument with her crazy feelings, Nala looked back to see Haiba. He wasn't doing much of an effort to paddle his raft along. Just floating down the stream as if there wasn't a care in the world.

"Haiba!" Nala yelled.

"What?" he shouted back.

"Row your boat!"

"Row my boat where?" Haiba retorted, confused. "Gently down the stream...?"

Nala rolled her eyes and just continued paddling. If Haiba was going to be a massive slowpoke – quite literally, actually – then so be it. She didn't need him. She could take care of this by herself. She could take care of *anything* by herself! Nothing was too challenging for her! She was invincible! She deserved to be a *god*!

Nala's eyes flashed red, and an evil smile spread across her face. *Prepare to die, Simba...*

"I like it!" the Interceptor exclaimed, leaving the jungle and continuing onto the flatlands. It would be less than an hour before he reached the Pride Lands. Just less than sixty minutes before revenge was at long last his.

A few buzzards had landed on the ground in front of him, mindlessly scrounging around for some food. The Interceptor walked right through the middle of the creatures, bashing them away with a paw. He screeched. "Get out of the way, ya bunch of freaks!"

The buzzards scattered away, and the Interceptor stopped for a moment. He held the Kifo Stone in his paw, knowing exactly how he was going to achieve his revenge on Simba. If he couldn't use the stone before twenty-four hours had passed, then he was going to make sure that *Simba* tried to use it instead.

Yes. That was clever. He'd make Simba using it, thus causing him to explode into a thousand gory pieces! If that wasn't a sneaky plan, than the Interceptor didn't know what was!

The Interceptor popped the Kifo Stone in his mouth and continued on forwards.

No one would be able to stop him now.

"This is absolutely deplorable," Zazu said, frowning as he watched Pori splash about in the waterhole. "You do realise that we're not supposed to be in the Pride Lands, don't you? I have been unceremoniously banned and exiled for life!"

"Oh, live a little, Zenu," Pori replied, closing her eyes and allowing a relaxing sigh to escape her beak. "Ah... this is the life. I'm surprised you never thought of taking me here before."

"I am not the one who brought us here!" Zazu protested. "You are! If the King finds out about this, then he'll have my feathers, I tell you! And as for you – well, I just don't know *what* will happen. Executions can be absolutely *ghastly* around here."

"Do you have to worry all the time?" Pori asked. "Ever since I've met you, you've done nothing but complain every single second! Come in here for a swim."

"I do not swim where other animals drink," Zazu said, flying up to a nearby tree and perching himself on one of the branches. "It's a positively repulsive thing to do. I suggest that you extricate yourself immediately!"

"I get plenty of exercise," said Pori.

"Ah, that wasn't what I— Oh, never mind," Zazu sighed, putting a wing to his beak. Pori still didn't seem to understand him. Then again, she didn't seem to understand *anything*! Her head was as empty as a cave!

"Zazu?"

Zazu's eyes widened at the sound of the new voice. He looked down from his position on the branch to see Simba staring up at him curiously. "Simba?" His expression suddenly turned to one of fear. "Oh, please don't tell your father I'm in the Pride Lands! *Please!* I'll do anything!"

"I'm not gonna tell him anything," Simba assured Zazu. "It's not like he'd listen, anyway..."

"Oh." Zazu calmed down a little. "Well, in that case, then what exactly is it that you want?"

"Um..." Simba shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know. I guess I just wanted to see what you were up to."

"Well, ever since your father wrongly terminated my employment, I have since taken up the position of teaching incompetent other hornbills – such as Pori over there," Zazu explained, gesturing to Pori floating in the waterhole.

"Hey!" Pori exclaimed, beaming at Simba. "You look just like Zazu! Except that you've got fur, and different eyes, and whiskers... Actually, you don't look like him at all. You're so alike!"

Zazu frowned. "You can see what I mean by 'incompetent'."

"I'll say," Simba agreed.

Zazu looked around. "Where's Nala? Are you two ruffians still running around causing problems?"

"No," Simba said, suddenly glumly reminded of how lonely he felt. "I haven't seen Nala in a while."

Zazu was struck as surprised by what Simba had told him. You could have knocked him over with a feather. Simba and Nala were meant for each other! Even *he* knew *that*! "What do you mean, you haven't seen her in a while?"

"We had a bit of a... fight," Simba told him, although it was more of a 'walking away without saying anything' rather than an actual 'fight'.

"Well, shouldn't you go and... 'make amends', so to speak?" Zazu asked the cub. "You can't just live out the rest of your existence being alone. Even I know that."

Simba stared at Zazu, and came to a sudden realisation.

He was absolutely right.

Somehow... making up with Nala seemed like the right thing to do. Maybe they had a chance at making things better again.

No! the dark side of Simba suddenly yelled in his head. *You won't go back to her! I won't have it!*

Just what the heck are you even talking about? Simba asked. *You're not even acting like me anymore! It's like you're a*

completely different person!

There was a sinister pause.

Well done.

"Ow!" Simba was suddenly struck by a searing pain in his ear, causing him to recoil backwards in shock.

Zazu stared at Simba, confused. "Something the matter, Simba? Have you got a monster in your ear?" He chuckled at his joke.

"Funnily enough, I think you might be... *right*," Simba said, gritting his teeth as the pain intensified. It was like something was trying to force its way out of his head!

Simba screamed, falling onto his back. Something *was* trying to get out! He could feel it. It felt so painful... and disgusting.

With a sickening *pop!* Simba found the pain suddenly disappearing. He looked at Zazu, who in turn looked ready to vomit.

Simba gazed down at what had popped out of his ear, and he gasped in horror...

AN: Oh, that is a *devilishly* sneaky cliffhanger, isn't it? What's come out of Simba's ear? Perhaps an Inque? Or is it something else entirely? You'll have to find out tomorrow... Leave your angry reviews on the way out.

Chapter 7: Chapter 7: The Truth of the Lie

AN: A complete story – on time! Time for the revelation of that sneaky cliffhanger. I know you hate them, but you've gotta admit, they're a good incentive for you to keep reading.

HeeroKistune17: I never knew I'd made Nala sexy in this. I just wanted to make her a bit... seductive? But I suppose you could argue that it's the same thing.

LionKingFactsGuy2: Oh, yeah. Nala kissed Haiba, all right. She's cuckoo in this story!

MarkPol: Hey, watch your language! There are children present! I won't have any of that disgusting language! "Cheeky"? It's an outrage!

Kblade: Thanks for the happy birthday. I must say, you readers aren't very punctual. It was two months ago!

HKGhost: Tojo was always a wimp. Didn't you notice that before? He's still got a heart full of courage, though. Don't misjudge that cub...

But there's no more secrecy now. Go and read! Fly, my pretties! Fly!

Chapter Seven: The Truth of the Lie

Simba's mouth was wide open in terror at the awful creature that had popped out of his ear.

"Froggy?"

Froggy – an insane frog who Simba had encountered in the past – had a big frown on his amphibian face. "That's right! It's me! Bet you didn't expect my great return so soon, huh?"

"Actually, it's been quite a while—"

"*Silence.*" Froggy interrupted, his yellow eyes wide with anger. "You've wrecked my super-mega-ultra evil plan!"

"Which is?" Simba asked, raising an eyebrow. Froggy may have been angry, but Simba wasn't exactly all that pleased to find that a psychotic frog had been nesting in his head like some kind of weird bird! It seemed that he didn't even have a right to his own *brain* any more!

"To wreck your perfect life, of course!" Froggy exclaimed. "You're the Prince of Perfection!"

"The Pride Lands," Simba corrected him.

"Don't correct me, boy!" Froggy snapped. "I know what I'm saying! Since you're royalty, it means that your life is perfect! Nothing bad *ever* happens to cubs like you!"

"You'd be surprised..." Simba remarked, a sudden sad frown crossing his face.

"And since you wrecked my plan last time around," Froggy explained, "I decided to come up with a *new* plan. I was going to hide inside of your head and make sure you turned to your supposed 'dark side' – which in fact was just me all along!" He chuckled evilly, looking very pleased with himself.

"Just how did you get inside my head, anyway?" Simba asked, confused. "You're way too big!"

"Believe me, it took a lot of practice," Froggy mumbled. "And a lot of mucus – but it was worth it! I was able to seize control of the... less friendly side of your mind. I tried to make that less friendly side the *whole* of your mind! Unfortunately, once you suspected that it wasn't *actually* your dark side, my manipulation wasn't going to work anymore!"

"You evil fiend!" Zazu accused, pointing at Froggy with a shaky wing. "How *dare* you try to take advantage of an innocent cub! Why, it's outrageous! It's maniacal! It's... well, it's just a bit evil, really."

"Who told you to say anything, Banana-Beak?" Froggy retorted. "I'm the one who's in charge around here! Being the evil ruler that I am, I now demand that you all bow down before me and let me take control of the kingdom. Come on. Start worshipping, please."

"You're nothing without a mind to control," Simba said, taking a step towards Froggy. "It won't take more than one little

move to squash you."

Simba raised a paw, ready to crush Froggy. It wasn't like anyone was going to miss him.

"Hey! You don't have a right to crush me!" Froggy protested. "I think after all my hard work I *deserve* to become the new King of the Pride Lands."

Simba just laughed. "Yeah, right."

Froggy's eyes widened in fear. He whimpered slightly, realising what was about to happen. "Oh, dear. Pain."

A sudden eagle-like screech caused the whole of the kingdom to fall silent. Simba, Froggy and Zazu all turned their heads—

—to find the Interceptor jumping into view. One of his paws was raised, and in that paw he held the Kifo Stone.

"*I like it!*" he yelled.

"Oh, no..." Simba moaned, covering his face with his forepaws. "Can this day get any worse?"

Unfortunately, the answer was yes.

"*Oof!*" Simba exclaimed, as he was suddenly attacked from the side and knocked to the ground. "Hey, Nala, what are you — Oh, no."

Nala had Simba tightly pinned down to the ground. He was particularly alarmed to find that her eyes were glowing red. "Did you do something to your fur?"

"Shut up, Simba!" Nala snapped angrily. "I think you know what time it is!"

Simba's eyes shifted left and right. "Afternoon?" he sheepishly guessed.

Nala growled so loudly that nearby birds scattered into the air. "I've had just about enough of your goofy jokes! It's time to die!"

"Um... why?" Simba asked. He wondered why he was feeling so stupid today...

"Because you broke my heart!" Nala replied. "Don't try to deny it, Simba. You left me. And for that you must *die*."

"That was a bit dramatic, wasn't it?" asked Froggy. "Even I wouldn't be so cheesy."

"Get out of the way, girlie!" the Interceptor shouted. "I ain't having you messing up my plan!"

"You'll be handing over that Kifo Stone in a minute," Nala threatened. "Or I might just have to cut your throat open first."

"Nala, you don't understand—" Simba began, before Nala pressed her sharp claws against his throat.

"No, *you* don't understand!" she accused. Simba saw that she was close to tears. "All my life, I was taught that you only ever truly fell in love with one person! Your soulmate – the one your heart belongs to! But it's not true. I know so – all because of you. You've destroyed me, Simba. And now I will destroy you."

Froggy rolled his big eyes, whispering to the Interceptor. "Jeez, this is a load of bull—"

"Nala. Really. You don't understand," Simba insisted, shaking his head and hoping that Nala would listen to him. "It wasn't me who wanted to quit. I mean it was, but I was being controlled – Froggy made me do it!"

Nala's eyes widened. "Huh?"

Told you so, said a little voice in her head.

"That's enough!" the Interceptor declared, batting Nala away from Simba and sending her rolling across the ground. "It's *my* turn, now!"

Simba looked up at the tree where Zazu was perched. "Zazu, help me out here!"

Zazu stood rigid. He looked around nervously. "I'm afraid I can't. I'm... occupied at the moment."

Simba sighed. "Why does no one help anymore?" he complained, before looking at the Interceptor. "Okay – what do you want?"

"Revenge!" the Interceptor exclaimed, holding the Kifo Stone up high. "And I'm going to get it, with the use of the all-powerful Kifo Stone!"

"No!" Simba yelled dramatically at the top of his voice. "Wait a sec – what the heck is a Kifo Stone?"

Froggy winced. "He is such an idiot..."

"It'll destroy you in an instant!" the Interceptor informed him. "But I'm gonna be fair, and let *you* have the chance to use it on me first."

"Really?" Simba was surprised. The Interceptor was actually giving him a chance?

"Oh, yeah," said the Interceptor, nodding. He held out the Kifo Stone. "Just picture me blowing into a million pieces. That should do the trick."

"Wow! Thanks!" Simba said, taking the Kifo Stone from the Interceptor and holding it in his paw. "What a nice guy!"

A few feet away, Nala was lying on her stomach, watching the events unfold before her eyes. She didn't know what to do. Was Simba telling the truth? Was he really being controlled by Froggy? It sounded true enough... He'd been under the effects of mind control in the past. Wasn't it inevitable that it would happen again?

"Did I miss anything?" asked Haiba, as he slowly crawled over to Nala's side. "Sorry I'm late. My new size is slowing me down a little."

But Nala didn't answer. She was too busy thinking.

This'll be easy, thought Simba, as he held the Kifo Stone, ready to imagine the Interceptor being reduced to ash by a sudden bolt of lightning. "You've made a big mistake, Mr Interceptor!"

"Oh, I'm sure I have," said the Interceptor sarcastically, stepping away from Simba. "Go on. Make me pay for my crimes! / *like it!*"

"So do I," Simba said with a sly smile.

Nala noticed the evil smirk on the Interceptor's face, and her mouth slowly dropped open in horror.

He's going to kill Simba, she realised. *But... but I hate him. I do!*

Her eyes glowed red.

No, you don't, that little voice said. *You know you love him. It wasn't Simba saying those things. You've gotta help him!*

Straining with her torn feelings, Nala slowly rose to her paws, gritting her teeth and closing her eyes as she struggled to make a decision on what to do. "I... I..."

Her eyes snapped open, and they were no longer red.

"*Simba!*"

Simba closed his eyes, and began to picture the Interceptor exploding right before his very eyes—

—when suddenly, he was pounced on again!

"What the...?" Simba exclaimed, falling to the ground. The Kifo Stone went flying from his paw, and ended up torpedoing straight into the waterhole. *Splash!* "Nala! I was just about to—"

"Don't do it! It'll kill you!" Nala urged, eyes wide with concern for her boyfriend. "It's all part of his plan!"

"But I thought you..."

Simba stared into her beautiful teal eyes, and realised that maybe she didn't want to kill him after all.

"Hello."

Nala smiled. "Hello."

And they kissed.

Haiba frowned at the sight of seeing them reunited. *Yo! I mean, hey! I thought I was supposed to be getting the kisses tonight!* He rolled his eyes. *Oh, well. I guess I can just go back to Jowai Resort next week for that...*

"No!" the Interceptor cried, fishing around in the waterhole with a paw. "Not the stone! I need that!" He frowned. "I *don't* like it!"

"Oh, shut it," Froggy snapped, before taking an almighty leap and giving the Interceptor a little kick in the backside.

Splash! The Interceptor landed in the water, and for some reason, he failed to resurface. Froggy watched with great amusement as a multitude of bubbles appeared in the water, and a faint gurgling noise emanated from beneath:

"I... like... it..."

Froggy smiled. "Well, you can't say the day's been *awful*..."

"Hey!" Simba looked up at Froggy. "I'm not finished with you yet!"

Froggy's expression transformed into one of terror. "Whoops! Gotta go!" And with that, he jumped high into the air, disappearing under the water.

"Hey! Hey, wait!" Simba cried, leaping to the edge of the waterhole and swishing his paws around frantically in it. "Aw, come on! You can't just escape like that!"

"Don't worry about it, Simba," said Nala, putting a paw on his shoulder. "I don't think we'll be seeing him for a while."

"So do you believe me now that I didn't want to quit?" he asked.

Nala smiled warmly at him. "Yeah. I believe ya." She gave him a little lick on the cheek. "Just so long as you accept my apology for trying to kill you."

Simba smiled back. "I think we can work something out..."

"Come on, Haiba!" Nala urged, keeping a steady pace along Haiba as he tried to run across an empty field. "You can do it! Run faster! *Faster!*"

"Remind me," Haiba said, panting as he tried to run. With his bulky size, it wasn't the easiest of tasks. "How long do I have to do this for?"

"Until you're thin again," Simba replied. He was running on Haiba's other side. "I'd say about three weeks."

"Ugh..." Haiba felt physically ill. "So does this mean that we're all back together now?"

Simba and Nala smiled at each other, once again reunited. "Well, *duh!*"

The End

AN: Aww! Back together once more! What, did you think I was going to split them apart for ever? Nonsense! The only way that would happen is if one of them suddenly died...

NEXT TIME: A strange deal results in Tojo and Tama being cleared out from their home in the jungle to make way for a certain villain's new dream home. Can Simba, Nala and Haiba take back the land?